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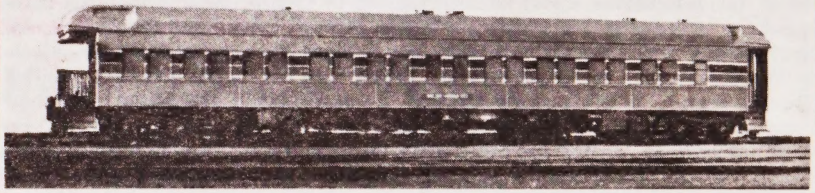
The late *Lucius Beebe's*
(and Charles Clegg's jointly owned)

PRIVATE PULLMAN PALACE CAR



The Virginia City

A rolling Venetian Doge's palace, a mini-Ritz Hotel on wheels. Outside it's AMTRAK, with Hyatt roller bearings. Inside it's fabulously beautiful, incredibly luxurious and practical.

Its fabled observation "living room," largest of any known private car, seats nine under two Venetian chandeliers—has a working white and gold marble fireplace and a hidden "wet bar." There are three large studio staterooms, each with upper berth and lower berth with electric blanket, and each with clothes closet, full lavatory and odorless, electric flush chemical toilet. The magnificent dining room seats six. Adjacent to the very efficient completely modern kitchen is the crew's studio stateroom with every imaginable comfort.

The car has 4 TV's, 3 gas/elec. refrigerators, an Ampex music system to every room, shower bath with Turkish bath, a complete auxiliary 220 volt heating system (also the standard steam heating system), a 2-ton Pullman air conditioning system, propane activated emergency generators (25,000 watts for heat, 3,000 watts for charging car's lighting batteries) and many other unusual features.

Car is in San Francisco Bay Area. Will be shown ONLY by appointment, and only to those able to furnish evidences of financial responsibility.

So, if SINCERELY interested as a prospective buyer, send a request on your business letterhead for a large brochure loaded with information and photographs, many in color, and other pertinent materials, with your check for $7.50 to: Charles Clegg, c/o R. Lusch & Associates, 874 North Point, San Francisco, Ca. 94109.

RAIL TRAVEL NEWS

40¢

VOL. 6 NO. 13
FIRST ISSUE OF
AUGUST 1976
#135

Readers Rate the Trains

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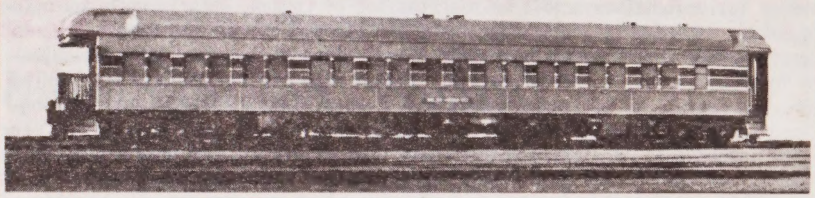

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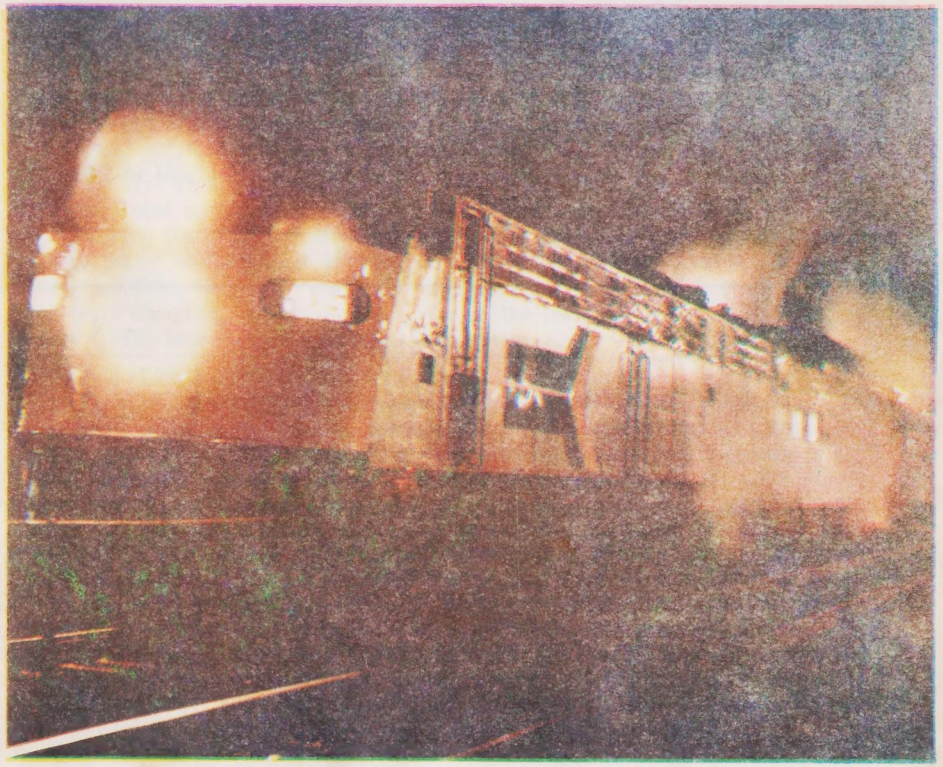

Readers Rate the Trains

ON THE COVER

This night view might have been more appropriate for our Independence Day issue, since the lights and escaping steam give a fireworks effect. Instead it heralds our third Reader Train Rating issue, and pictures a rapidly disappearing breed of passenger train equipment. As we consider, in this issue, the impact of Amfleet cars and coming bi-levels, we look at Amtrak E unit 405 pulling an Amtrak special consist of five domes: cars 9330, 9479, 9813, 9545, and 9225, roundtrip Chicago-Milwaukee. In this April 14, 1973 view the train is southbound at Glenview, IL. Kodachrome transparency by Arthur D. Ulbricht.

LETTERS

I really enjoy reading RTN--it always gives the freshest information that you would have to wait for 1 to 2 months to get in the other magazines. In my recent travels since March, it seems Amtrak is finally getting on the right track. Having traveled on the BROADWAY LIMITED, SILVER STAR, CHAMPION, PANAMA LIMITED, NORTH COAST HIAWATHA, and the ABE LINCOLN, it seems that the cars are cleaner, on-board personnel friendlier, there are fewer air conditioning malfunctions, better food in the diner, and even better track. Compared to the trips I have made in 1974 and 1975, the trips made so far in 1976 have been a marked improvement in all categories. Maybe they finally got rid of the PC crews or else sent them to the Amtrak Charm School for re-education.

It looks as if Amtrak is aging from the crawling stage to the walking stage, and it shows in the on-board services. Comments of other passengers have ranged from "it sure is an improvement" to "I didn't know that it was this much fun to ride a train." I wonder if any other readers have gotten the same vibrations in their recent train travels? Keep up the good work.

Andrew J. Bianchi
Chicago, Illinois

OREGON CAPER

An AMTRAK special train Columbus Day Weekend October 8-11 between Los Angeles and Klamath Falls complete with private sleepers, diner, lounge, chair cars, and a scenery-filled schedule. Train departs Los Angeles for an overnight run to Oakland. The route continues to Sacramento via Niles Canyon, thence to Gerber via Marysville & Chico. Dunsmuir, the Sacramento River Canyon, Cantara Loop, Mount Shasta and the Worden Line Change will all be viewed during daylight hours. Overnight Saturday evening in hotels at Klamath Falls. Sunday there is a choice of two outings: a Crater Lake tour, or a trip on the McCloud River Railroad from McCloud to Burney and return. The AMTRAK special makes an overnight return to the Bay Area, arriving Monday morning, with a leisurely trip down the coast for Los Angeles passengers, arriving there late Monday afternoon. Fares start at $198 from Los Angeles and $160 from Oakland. Information and reservations from the Bay Area Electric Railroad Association, P.O. Box 3694, San Francisco, California 94119. Telephone (415) 673-6547.

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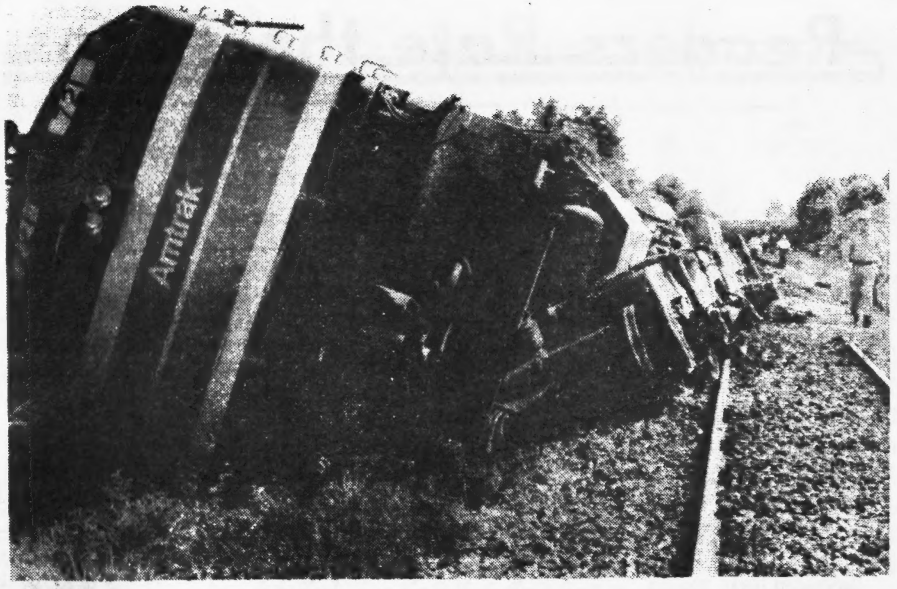


The above photo is of the Jun 30 derailment of the PANAMA LIMITED (see details in our last two issues), courtesy of the Jackson (MS) Daily News, showing GE diesel 721 at the head of the derailed southbound train. The cause of the wreck, which took the life of a track worker, has not been determined. One newspaper account of the derailment quoted a passenger as feeling that something was wrong with the train during the night preceding the wreck. She said "The train kept stopping, and the conductor would get out and look under the thing... Every time we'd stop, I'd smell something burning." Chef Cesar Arguelles was looking out a diner window as the train derailed, and had a direct view of the incident, but saw only dust and smoke flying from under the derailed lead engine.

DEMOCRATS PLANNING CAMPAIGN TRAIN IN FALL

Amtrak said that it has several proposals for a whistle-stop campaign train for Presidential candidate Jimmy Carter during the fall campaign, and is now setting prices for the tentative plans. A Washington writer referred to Carter this month as "a railroad buff," and said he was enthusiastic about the train idea, as he added "I didn't want to be elected president. I just wanted a train ride."

U.S.A. RAIL PASS FARES SET FOR OFF-SEASON

Amtrak announced Aug 4 that effective Sept 8, the U.S.A. RAIL Pass will sell for $165 for 14 days, $220 for 21 days, and $275 for 30 days. These prices, effective thru May 15, 1977, are 10% higher than last spring's, are less than the $250, $325 and $400 rates that prevail thru the summer. Amtrak's overseas U.S.A. RAIL Pass still sells for $150, $200, and $250, but this will be raised Nov 1 to the same fall rates as the domestic pass. Amtrak has decided to stop referring to the domestic pass as "use-a-rail pass".

TRAIN RIDERSHIP CONTINUES TO INCREASE

Figures for May Amtrak ridership, released in late July, show an 8% increase over May 1975, systemwide. Long distance ridership was up a whopping 24%, and short distance was up 4%. Preliminary figures for June indicate an estimated 9½% increase over June 1975, Amtrak reported just before we go to press.

Mailing date for this issue of RTN: August 9, 1976.

Readers Rate the Trains

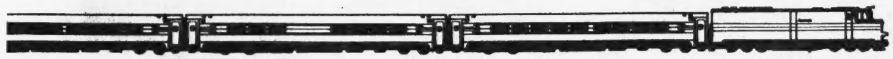
1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9

EXTREMELY POOR ↑ AVERAGE, ACCEPTABLE ↑ EXTREMELY GOOD

Here are the results of our third reader train rating survey, covering the period Dec 16, 1975-Jun 30, 1976. The figures in the tables are the average (mean) ratings volunteered by readers on the 1-9 judgment scale shown above. The last column in each table is the rank of each train within its group, ranked on the basis of category A, Overall Impression. If a given train is missing from our tables, it is because we received too few ratings to average. The results of our previous, second survey appeared in the First January issue, available at 40¢ each postpaid.

UNCONVENTIONAL TRAINS	A. OVERALL	B. NON-FOOD CREW	C. FOOD, LOUNGE CREW	D. FOOD QUALITY	E. CONDITION OF CARS	F. ROUTING	G. STATION SERVICES	H. TRACK & ROADBED	I. SCHEDULING	J. PROMOTION	K. TYPE OF CARS	PREVIOUS RANK	PRESENT RANK
N.E. Corridor Amfleet	7.3	6.7	6.3	5.4	8.7	8.3	6.5	6.2	7.0	6.6	7.6	1	1
Milwaukee Turboliners	7.2	7.8	3.8	4.2	7.8	7.2	8.0	5.5	7.8	5.0	8.0		2
N.E. Turbotrains	7.0	5.8	6.2	5.8	6.2	8.2	4.8	5.8	4.5	2.3	8.0	5	3
Metroliners	6.9	6.8	6.2	5.6	6.5	8.6	6.4	5.7	8.5	7.4	7.8	2	4
Detroit Turboliners	6.4	5.8	5.0	3.7	7.8	8.3	5.8	5.3	7.2	6.8	6.0	4	5
SHORT DISTANCE & CORRIDOR TRAINS													
PALMETTO*	8.7	8.0	8.0	8.0	9.0	9.0	6.0	8.3	8.3	9.0	9.0		1
BLUE RIDGE*	8.0	7.0	7.3	6.0	8.8	8.0	4.8	6.5	7.8	5.0	8.8	9	2
BLACK HAWK	7.8	8.8	7.8	5.4	6.8	8.4	4.8	6.6	5.8	2.1	7.0	1	3
PUGET SOUND/MT. RAINIER**	7.6	8.0	7.0	5.4	7.4	8.1	7.7	6.3	7.9	1.8	6.1	12	4
BANKERS*	7.5	8.2	7.0	6.0	8.5	8.8	7.2	6.2	7.5	6.0	7.8		5
MERCHANTS LIMITED*	7.5	7.5	7.6	5.9	7.6	8.9	5.9	6.4	8.0	7.6	6.5		5
STATE HOUSE*	7.0	6.7	7.0	6.5	8.7	7.7	5.7	5.0	6.3	4.5	6.0		7
ABRAHAM LINCOLN	6.9	6.2	6.3	7.1	6.8	7.8	4.9	5.7	6.1	3.3	8.1	6	8
ANN RUTLEDGE*	6.8	7.2	5.3	5.0	8.8	7.9	4.6	5.2	6.9	3.9	6.6		9
PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL**	6.8	6.0	6.5	6.8	6.5	8.5	7.5	5.5	6.2	1.7	6.8	9	9
QUAD CITY ROCKET (RI)	6.6	7.6	8.6	8.5	5.0	7.5	5.7	3.8	7.0	5.0	7.5	5	11
BLUE WATER LIMITED	6.6	6.9	5.9	5.0	6.4	7.9	6.5	5.3	5.5	4.5	7.0	3	11
SAN DIEGANS**	6.1	7.0	5.3	4.4	6.0	8.4	6.3	5.9	7.4	4.7	6.7	4	13
STATE HOUSE**	6.0	5.0	5.3	4.7	7.7	8.0	5.0	5.7	6.0	3.0	6.0		14
Empire Service	5.9	5.9	4.7	4.4	5.3	8.3	4.4	5.6	7.1	4.7	5.6	7	15
PIEDMONT (SR)	5.5	6.2	5.6	3.6	6.8	6.9	5.4	7.1	4.3	3.0	4.6	15	16
PEORIA ROCKET (RI)	5.3	9.0	8.0	3.3	5.7	7.0	4.7	1.7	4.0	2.0	5.3		17
SAN JOAQUIN	5.1	6.9	5.1	4.7	5.4	4.6	5.1	5.7	6.1	1.9	4.9	11	18
Inland Route RDCs	4.9	5.9			5.5	7.0	5.1	6.1	5.2	3.0	4.6	13	19
N.E. Conventional Trains	4.0	5.8	5.8	2.6	4.8	8.2	5.0	5.8	5.2	3.2	3.8	14	20

*Amfleet **Pre-Amfleet



LONG DISTANCE TRAINS	A. OVERALL	B. NON-FOOD CREW	C. FOOD, LOUNGE CREW	D. FOOD QUALITY	E. CONDITION OF CARS	F. ROUTING	G. STATION SERVICES	H. TRACK & ROADBED	I. SCHEDULING	J. PROMOTION	K. TYPE OF CARS	PREVIOUS RANK	PRESENT RANK
AUTO-TRAIN (A-T)	8.0	8.6	8.2	6.4	8.4	8.1	6.9	7.2	8.5	7.1	7.2	1	1
RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR (DRGW)	7.7	7.2	7.3	8.3	6.5	8.8	5.7	7.0	6.8	2.8	8.3	4	2
SOUTHWEST LIMITED	7.4	7.0	7.0	7.2	7.0	7.8	6.8	7.7	7.6	5.0	7.2	5	3
SOUTHERN CRESCENT (SR)	7.3	7.1	7.3	7.7	7.6	8.0	6.7	6.9	7.0	6.0	7.1	3	4
SILVER METEOR	7.3	7.2	7.1	6.8	6.9	8.0	6.8	7.0	7.2	5.2	6.6	6	4
NORTH COAST HIAWATHA	7.2	7.3	6.9	7.0	7.0	8.7	6.7	6.0	7.0	3.2	7.0	13	6
CHAMPION	7.1	7.0	7.3	7.4	6.7	8.2	6.8	7.6	7.8	4.6	7.1		7
ADIRONDACK	7.0	7.9	7.0	6.5	7.2	8.4	6.2	6.3	6.5	3.6	7.0	2	8
LONE STAR	6.9	7.2	6.8	6.9	6.8	7.8	6.8	6.8	7.1	3.2	7.0	11	9
COAST STARLIGHT	6.7	6.7	5.6	6.3	6.5	8.3	7.2	7.0	7.4	3.9	6.1	8	10
EMPIRE BUILDER	6.6	6.4	5.7	6.0	6.5	7.5	6.6	5.7	6.6	3.9	7.5	7	11
NIGHT OWL	6.5	7.3	5.3	5.0	6.9	7.6	4.7	7.1	7.1	3.5	7.5	11	12
FLORIDIAN	6.5	7.2	7.3	7.5	6.4	6.2	6.4	5.8	6.4	3.5	6.9	8	12
SILVER STAR	6.4	5.9	6.4	6.8	5.8	7.4	6.6	5.9	5.3	4.4	6.2	14	14
SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR	6.4	6.7	6.5	6.9	5.9	7.4	6.1	5.9	6.8	3.8	6.5	14	14
NIAGARA RAINBOW*	6.3	6.7	6.2	6.5	6.4	7.7	5.0	5.8	7.3	3.8	7.2	20	16
SUNSET LIMITED	6.3	6.5	6.3	7.0	6.4	7.8	5.8	6.0	4.6	2.9	6.4	16	16
LAKE SHORE LIMITED	6.2	6.6	5.9	6.3	6.0	7.7	5.0	5.5	4.9	5.0	5.8	10	17
MONTREALER	6.2	6.1	5.9	6.6	5.6	7.5	6.7	5.6	6.9	4.2	5.7	16	17
INTER-AMERICAN	6.2	7.2	6.6	5.9	6.0	5.8	4.4	6.9	5.1	2.5	6.6	22	17
PANAMA LIMITED	5.9	6.4	6.3	6.2	5.1	8.0	6.4	5.2	6.9	2.9	5.9	19	21
NATIONAL LIMITED	5.8	6.5	5.7	5.6	5.4	6.4	3.8	5.4	5.4	2.2	5.2	18	22
BROADWAY LIMITED	5.7	6.2	6.6	7.0	4.9	6.7	5.2	4.5	5.5	4.2	6.3	23	23
SOUTHERN CRESCENT (Amtrak)	5.1	4.7	4.4	5.5	5.0	7.0	5.6	6.7	6.6	3.7	5.0	23	24
JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY	4.6	5.9	4.3	4.9	4.3	4.8	4.4	4.4	4.4	2.7	4.7	25	25
MOUNTAINEER	4.4	6.3	4.7	4.0	4.3	4.3	7.3	6.3	4.0	4.7	7.0	21	26

*Formerly the EMPIRE STATE EXPRESS

CANADIAN TRAINS													
CP CANADIAN	7.7	7.6	7.8	6.3	7.1	8.6	6.9	7.2	7.2	3.0	8.4		1
CN CAVALIER	7.2	7.0	5.0	3.5	7.2	7.6	7.8	7.6	7.2	4.0	7.2		2
BCR CARIBOO DAYLINER	6.7	6.7	6.3	4.7	5.7	8.3	5.0	6.0	7.0	5.0	7.0		3
CN Turbotrains	6.5	5.5	5.0	4.2	6.5	7.0	7.0	6.0	7.0	6.2	5.2		4
CN Tempo Trains	6.5	5.0	6.8	5.8	6.5	6.5	6.2	6.0	6.5	4.7	5.5		4
CN SUPER CONTINENTAL	6.3	5.3	6.3	6.0	6.1	6.6	7.0	6.0	4.0	5.8	5.1		6
CN Rapidos	5.9	6.7	5.3	3.0	6.7	8.0	7.3	8.0	7.0	7.0	4.7		7
TH&B Toronto-Buffalo RDC	5.8	6.8			5.8	6.6	4.8	5.6	5.2	1.0	4.4		8

Our sincere thanks to the many readers who took the trouble to send train ratings and comments. The number of respondents to this third survey was higher than ever.

A few brief comments after going over the numerical results and the many, many reader comments: the most obvious conclusion to be drawn is that the new Amfleet cars are achieving generally very high rider acceptance. The PALMETTO received the highest Overall rating of any train in our surveys to date. In the short distance category, the top ratings are dominated by Amfleet-equipped trains. Because of the introduction of Amfleet equipment, short distance trains are getting significantly higher Overall ratings than in the past: the average rating of the top ten short distance trains is 7.5 in this survey, compared to 6.8 in our last one. Once again, Amfleet equipment outrates the other types of unconventional equipment, with an Overall 7.3 rating. There seems to be a small tendency to rate conventional trains lower now, possibly since they can now be compared with many shiny, new cars on the rails: the top ten long distance trains received an average Overall rating of 7.3 as compared to 7.5 last time.

Auto-Train retains its position as the highest-rated long distance train in the U.S., and a major shift is the drop in the ADIRONDACK's rank from second to eighth. This appeared to be due primarily to complaints about missing and bad-ordered equipment, a problem that plagued the New York-Montreal train during the past months. The SOUTHWEST LIMITED thus becomes Amtrak's highest-rated cruise train, but it is beaten by the RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR, as last time. The other major shift in long distance ratings is a jump by the NORTH COAST HIAWATHA from 13th to 6th. The LAKE SHORE LIMITED dropped from 10th to 17th, primarily because of complaints over its timekeeping. One would expect that its ratings will improve when track repair on its route is completed.

As space permits in this and succeeding issues, we will print many of the comments readers made with their train ratings.

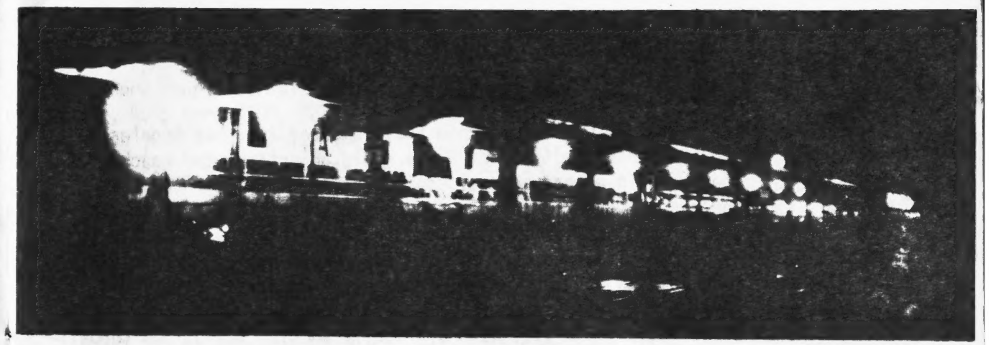
GENERAL COMMENTS

"On a business trip to Jackson, MS I had to make my own arrangements, as my government employer sends, arranges, and pays people for air service, or use of government vehicle on shorter trips. I expected the cost to be perhaps $100 greater by rail, but the fortunate addition of a slumbercoach to the LAKE SHORE LIMITED two weeks earlier, and some saving in hotel and in cost of shipping samples brought back (checked free on Amtrak), made cost about same as air (needed hotel only 3 nights in Mississippi instead of 5).

"I think emphasis should be as soon as possible on reliable equipment, proper heat control, fast service (better to compete with autos), on-time performance, more slumbercoach or equivalent low-cost service, high-capacity sleeper, good clean common toilets, but separate male and female." (John M. Sayward, Randolph, VT).

"The new Amfleet equipment is quite an improvement over the old Penn Central coaches. I most enjoyed the smoothness of the ride, even over bad track. The Amcafe, altho not my idea of perfect food service, is a significant improvement over the snack bar. Ideally, there should be full dining cars on those trains on the 4½-hour NY-Boston route that include the dinner hour. Altho the quality of the MERCHANTS LIMITED has declined because of the loss of the diner, on the whole I think we are better off with the Amfleet than with what we had before" (Stephen Linde, New York).

"Sad to say, after 5 years, passengers are usually treated as nuisances whom the Amtrak employees wish would go away. Among recent experiences, I would like to cite the ticket agent in Boston who 'told me off' and closed down the ticket window when I attempted to make an off-route Metroliner reservation; the ticket agent in Washington who insisted that 'we don't have a train to Montreal' 45 minutes before the departure of the MONTREALER; the sleeping car porter on the SILVER STAR who disappeared for 5 hours; the large roach peacefully crawling across my breakfast table on the CHAMPION; filthy bedrooms (CHAMPION and SILVER STAR); novice passengers wondering why they can't see anything thru the 'dirty windows' as they squint thru Amtrak's yellowed lexan; the dining car crew on the RILEY spending the dinner hour chatting and



Most highly-rated train: the PALMETTO at Savannah Jun 19. Ken Maylath photo.

smoking in the lounge seats while their prospective diners go unserved and unfed and other passengers stand around hopelessly waiting for food; the horrible food service in the Northeast Corridor (including Metroliners and Amfleet trains) where a 20 or 30 minute wait in line for service often brings a reply that there is no water for coffee or all the sandwiches are gone; lounge cars and coach rest rooms which are rarely, if ever, cleaned after a train leaves its terminal... No one loves passenger trains more than I, but I have reached the point where I actively discourage my non-railfan friends from using Amtrak as I am tired of listening to their stories of bad service and abuse by Amtrak and railroad employees" (Reader, Hyattsville, MD).

"Amtrak missed the boat on Turbos and Amfleet because of no provision for music on headphones as in airlines. Lexan is a disaster. Amtrak needs much more variety in their menus, but on-board personnel are better than they were a year ago. Corridor track NY-DC is pretty good, but SP Rosenburg to Houston is the worst I've ridden on. The SUNSET flies, then is agonizingly slow. If they left New Orleans in the morning they could reach San Antonio at a decent hour. INTER-AMERICAN situation at San Antonio is a disgrace. Jacksonville station too far out of town. Where's the "downtown to downtown" bit?" (John W. Turner, Lafayette, LA).

"Greatest need for improvement: the dismal, barbarous meal service on the Turbo and Amfleet trains. Worst single piece of equipment encountered: the ex-L&N lunch counter lounge on the RILEY, lacking when I rode it in little amenities like working refrigerators in the galley. Best piece of equipment encountered: the rotating seat parlor-bar-lounge on the SILVER STAR" (Alan Follet, Chicago, IL).

"These ratings are for a trip our family (2 adults, 2 grade school children) took from Yakima, WA to Pittsburgh, PA. I have been a railfan for years, and hope to continue, but Amtrak almost lost us on this one. Our main problem was with seat reservations. They made mistakes on 2 out of 4 chances. From Chicago to Pittsburgh, our family was split up on two sides of a partition in the middle of the coach (which also had no heat). The big problem was westbound out of Chicago. We ended up with four facing seats, two of which didn't recline, and no leg rests. It was a very uncomfortable 2000 miles. Also, the levels of service were like night and day, not only between whole trains, but within each train we rode. On category E, Condition of cars, I didn't include windows. They were all so terrible, and I understand this is a systemwide problem" (David R. Tufts, Yakima, WA).

"On-board services is Amtrak's biggest weakness. Maybe Amtrak can do nothing about antique equipment and rough roadbed, but it can and must improve on-board services. An example: on the COAST STARLIGHT, between Oakland and Seattle, I asked my young sleeping car porter to call me in the morning as we left Klamath Falls, so I could take some photos in the Cascades. He said, 'Man, that's 5:30 in the morning' --I'm gonna be sleepin'. I asked if he could have the man in the next car give me the call, and he said he'd see what he could do. I was not called" (David L. Anderson, Topeka, KS).

RIDING THE LAS VEGAS LIMITED

by Taylor B. Powell

A friend and I rode the new Las Vegas train in late June, from Los Angeles to Barstow. Imagine our surprise to find not 40-year-old SP articulated coaches, but hi-levels! They were in a most unusual configuration--two chair cars, two low-levels (a diner and a lounge), and then two more hi-levels.

The tour director for the service had hollered loud and long to get hi-levels in place of the junky Reno Fun Train equipment. He said he is now working to get Amfleet equipment. We pointed out the better seat spacing in the hi-level cars, and perhaps he will try to stay with hi-levels.

I feel that the Las Vegas train will have difficulty working well. The competitive autos, buses, or planes are either faster, cheaper, or more convenient. Many passengers made the usual comment as we crawled up Cajon Pass, "Why are we going so slow?" and similar remarks, as they don't realize the steepness of the grade.

Our train carried about 250 passengers. As I passed thru the train, I mused that the average traveler (altho this is difficult for a railfan to understand) is bored to tears when he travels, by whatever mode. Therefore speed is important in order to obtain his travel dollars.

I was certainly full of nostalgia, remembering all those glorious trips to Barstow in the 50s and 60s, on the CITY OF LOS ANGELES, the CITY OF ST. LOUIS, or the GRAND CANYON going. But always the CHIEF back--sitting alone, usually in the magnificent Big Dome sailing thru Fontana at speeds to defy the laws of physics. Alas, no more speed over the "branch line"-looking, rough-riding, 2nd District these days--60mph is about tops. However, the new train does give a rare daylight ride from Los Angeles. There have been many changes since my last CHIEF ride ten years ago. The line is in the middle of a freeway thru Pasadena. And, of course, BN "locotrol" locomotives on the parallel SP freight line in Cajon Pass are novel, as is the new line-change at Summit. The new Barstow Yard of Santa Fe is a big change also.

As we stepped from the hi-level cars to the 120° "Casa del Desierto" in Barstow, I remarked to the UP conductor: "Doesn't quite look like #104 ten years ago." The conductor was completely "in uniform" and wore a UP "Overland" watch fob. He looked stunned at first. I really thought he might cry as I walked away. He would cry for sure if he could see my slides of two UP refurbished dome diners essentially scrapped behind Auto-Train's Sanford yard!

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"I cook just about everything on the train--even your breakfast muffins--just as I did when I started in 1941... Folks are always saying how things are changing these days. Nothin's like it used to be. But I tell 'em I know one thing that hasn't changed. The SOUTHERN CRESCENT between Washington and New Orleans. It's just gotten a whole lot better." --Southern Crescent Chef Louis Price in current SR ad

"Probably the worst ride in the Amtrak system is on the St. Louis-Laredo INTER-AMERICAN, which travels through hostile territory, over the road of the Missouri Pacific. The track is in excellent shape, but MoPac won't let the train go over 55 miles an hour. It is tempting to say that a traveler should avoid the INTER-AMERICAN, a wretched train in many respects, but that is precisely what MoPac's management would like the traveling public to do. The train should be ridden for spite."

--Tracy Kidder in The Atlantic Monthly, August

CARS & CONSISTS

*More Fourth of July consists; at Washington DC: SILVER STAR, train 82: engines 609, 550; cars 1100, 3221 "Miami Beach", 2793 "Nassau County", 3225 "Ponte Vedra Beach", 8006 "Boston", 4469, 4466, 4584, 4447, 4410, 3314, 8010, 4580, 4445, 5601, 5603, 5669, 2767 "Jacksonville." MERCHANTS LIMITED, train 178: engine 4932 (GG-1); cars 1295 (power car), 20120 (Amclub), 21094, 21020, 21055 (Amcoaches), 20202 (Amlounge), 21089, 21059, 21058 (Amcoaches). COLONIAL, train 167: engine 711 (P30); cars 1357 (baggage), 20111 (Amclub), 21105, 21060, 21090, 21043 (Amcoaches), 21083 (60-seat Amcoach). MONTREALER, train 60: engine 952 (E60); cars 1525, 2776 "Alachua County", 2705 "Winter Haven", 2772 "Columbia", 8333, 3301, 5668, 5655, 6017, 7252, 6018, 1573 (ConRail), 1591 (ConRail), 1598 (ConRail). JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY, train 51: engines 638 (SDP40F), 407 (E8); cars 1189, 1036, 2702 "St. Petersburg", 5239, 5426, 5412, 8300. SOUTHERN CRESCENT, SR train 1: SR engines 6912, 6901, 6911, 6904 (E8's); cars 704, 815, 954, 2352 "Crescent Moon", 3306 (diner), 2023 "Warrior River", 3403 "Holston River", 820, 830, 829. PALMETTO/NEW YORKER, train 90/164: engine 964 (E60); cars 1373 (baggage), 20677 (Amclub), 21804, 21805 (60-seat Amcoaches), 21047 (Amcoach), 21800 (60-seat Amcoach), 20752 (Amlounge), 21036, 21030, 21123, 21002 (Amcoaches), 20009 (Amcafe added at Washington). COLONIAL, train 166: engine 710 (P30); cars 1365 (baggage), 20136 (Amclub), 21175, 21075, 21065 (Amcoaches), 20021 (Amcafe added at Washington), 21103 (Amcoach added at Washington).

*Two new Turboliners for Empire Service spotted at Rensselaer, NY about Aug 1: set one: power coach 154, coach 175, food service coach 174, coach 176, power coach 156. Set two: power coach 150, coach 170, food service coach 171, coach 172, power coach 152.

*SUPER CONTINENTAL, CN train 2, Winnipeg, Jul 21: engines 6509 (FP9A), 6614 (F9B), 6612 (F9B), 6502 (FP9A); cars 9658, 9660 (baggage), 76-seat coaches 5569, 5527, 5518, 5542; 759 cage-lounge; 5906, 5711 (52-seat Dayniter coaches); 1105 "Mount Tekarra" (5Cpt/3DR slpr), 433 dinette-dorm, 1176 "Greenway" (6 sec/6 rmt 4 DBR slpr), 1156 "Evanston" (4 sec/8 dup rmt/ 4 DBR slpr), 1115 "Edmundston" (8-4-4 slpr), 2321 "Entre-Nous" club lounge, 1348 48-seat diner, 1136 "Endeavour" (4-8-4 slpr), 1123 "Elgin" (ditto), 1134 "Endako" (ditto), 2135 "Grande Riviere" (10-6 slpr), 2014 "Irondale" (24 dup rmt). No dome on train but one in station.

*CANADIAN, CP train 1, Sudbury, Jul 10: engines 1410, 4475; cars 603 (bag-dorm), 116, 103, 114 (coaches), 512 coffee-shop dome, sleepers "Burton Manor," "Dunsmuir Manor", "Chateau Lemoyne", diner "Annapolis", sleepers "Grant Manor", "Chateau Dollier", sleeper-dome-lounge "Tweedsmuir Park." Train 2, Winnipeg, Jul 21: engines 1432, 1409; cars 605 (bag-dorm), coaches 122, 107, 105, Skyline coffee shop dome 513, sleepers "Hunter Manor", "Chateau Iberville", diner "Fairholme", sleepers "MacDonald Manor", "Chateau Latour", sleeper-dome-lounge "Prince Albert Park."

*LAS VEGAS LIMITED, train 781, San Bernardino, Jul 25: engines 220 (F40), 502 (SDP40F); cars 9936, 9930, 3501, 8500, 9904, 9946.

*INTER-AMERICAN, train 21, Little Rock, Aug 1: engines 414, 426 (E8's); cars 1409, 2685, 8322, 4845, 4840, 4425, 4846.

*STATE HOUSE, train 305, Chicago Jul 31: engines 421, 411 (E9A's); cars 9460 (deadhead), 1603 "Kent County", 5660, 5801, 5802, 5803, 8323, 9320 "Silver Terrace" Train 308, Springfield, Aug 1: engines 421, 411; cars 1063, 2029 (deadhead, outshopped Jul 30), 1603, 5660, 5801, 5802, 5803, 8323, 9320.

*COAST STARLIGHT, train 11, all at San Jose: Jul 22: engines 572, 566; cars 1008, 1419, 6033, 4866, 4865, 4861, 3350, 4549, 4544, 4500, 4855, 4499, 9374 dome lounge, 8039, 2717 "Pine Fern", 2713 "Pine Cavern", deadhead 4510. Jul 24: engines 569, 570; cars 1114, 2725 "Pine Lodge" (dorm), 4495, 4050, 5231, 4872, 8103, 4867, 5236, 6040, 4856, 4870, 9370 dome lounge, 8030, 2722 "Pine Island", 2728 "Pine Peak", 2361 "Regal City", deadhead BN 710 baggage in green & white.

On the Bi-level

AMTRAK ADDS LUXURY FEATURES TO ITS NEW CARS

Under the old Roger Lewis Amtrak, 235 new bi-level long distance passenger cars were ordered to replace old equipment on Western trains. For some reason, Amtrak at that time must have felt that passengers did not need first class (as opposed to economy) sleeping car accommodations, nor did they merit lounge space. Now, on July 29, Amtrak took steps to upgrade the features of its new cars, and made plans to augment its original order. Here's the way things shape up now:

Amtrak agreed to order 14 more cars, raising the total on order from Pullman-Standard to 249. At the same time it made plans to order 35 "sight-seer" lounge cars after Oct 1, when its Fiscal 77 appropriation is solidified. Thus 284 new bi-level cars will be under construction, and they will replace 428 conventional cars. When the bi-levels begin arriving next year, they will be used to re-equip the following trains, in this order: EMPIRE BUILDER, NORTH COAST HIAWATHA, COAST STARLIGHT, SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR, SOUTHWEST LIMITED, SUNSET LIMITED. The remaining long distance trains in the Amtrak system will share the best of the present conventional equipment, which probably means the PANAMA LIMITED and the FLORIDIAN will use the SOUTHWEST LIMITED's hi-level cars.

Another change in Amtrak's restructuring of its bi-level order is the reconfiguring of 42 proposed coaches into coach-baggage cars, using the lower level for baggage and possibly restrooms, and seating passengers only on the upper level. To do this, Amtrak cancelled its order for 26 coach-cafe cars and added 24 coaches to the order, to compensate for reduced capacity. One dining car was added for reserve protection.

The sleeping car order has had some important changes. Amtrak originally ordered 55 economy sleepers; now it's asking for 34 economy sleepers and 36 mixed-class sleepers. The new mixed-class design will have 10 double bedrooms on the upper level, with economy, slumbercoach-type rooms downstairs, and one larger, family room additionally. The economy sleepers will have 20 duplex-roomette-like rooms on the upper level, having an upper and lower bed in each, without individual toilet facilities. The first class bedrooms, on the other hand, will be roomier than conventional double bedrooms, and will incorporate some of the features mentioned in RTN's recent reader survey of first class service (see First April issue): they will be equipped with public address/music systems, will have lockable doors, individual toilet facilities (a permanent, non-folding wash basin included), and may feature windows on both sides of the room, with drapes. Amtrak said the design of these bedrooms is not "locked in" yet.

Missing from the equipment on order is any roomette room. For individual travelers, presumably the economy duplex room would be usually used. Also missing initially will be lounge cars, since that order will not be placed until this fall. Amtrak said the newly-equipped trains will have to run without lounges at first.

There will be special facilities for handicapped passengers in the sleepers and coaches.

The present re-structured equipment order looks like this:

type of car	old order	revised order
Coach	120	102
Coach/Baggage	-	42
Cafe Coach	26	-
Economy Sleeper	55	34
Mixed-Class Sleeper	-	36
Diner	34	35
Total no. of cars ordered:	235	249

Amtrak's new "sight-seer" lounge cars will not be like the design shown in our First April issue, but rather are said to closely resemble the Santa Fe hi-level lounge, illustrated here.

Train consists with bi-level equipment will run about 7 cars: 1 coach-baggage, 3 coaches, 1 diner, 1 economy sleeper, 1 mixed-class sleeper. Later a lounge will be added. Six consists each will be assigned to the EMPIRE BUILDER, SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR; five to the NORTH COAST HIAWATHA, SOUTHWEST LIMITED, and SUNSET; and four to the COAST STARLIGHT.

Amtrak said it is now at work on the design of an Amfleet sleeping car (Amsleeper?).

Looking like an antiquated postcard in our off-color reproduction, the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR's cars will soon be antiquated by comparison with the bi-levels to introduced on the train in the near future. Altho this photo of our favorite train was taken exactly two years ago, the SFZ looks the same today as it heads westbound thru the Sierra (E. M. Frimbo told us the other day it's his favorite Amtrak train too). Ektachrome transparency by Message Media.

AMFLEET HITS THE NORTHWEST

by Glenn Lee

With a minimum of publicity, and under the heavy scrutiny of Amtrak executives, operation of Amfleet cars on "local" trains from Seattle began Monday, July 19. First Amfleet departure was the 8:30am PUGET SOUND for Portland, followed at 5:30 pm by the MOUNT RAINIER, also for Portland, and the 6:15pm PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL trip to Vancouver, British Columbia (see last issue, p.18, for consists).

Open house displays of the equipment had been held July 16 and 17 at Seattle, and in Portland July 19 during the mid-day layover of the equipment at Union Station. Due to lack of a promotional budget, no initial advertising of the new cars was possible. Publicity was limited to TV news coverage and reports by transportation writers in the local dailies. The equipment was reported running at "average" loads during the first week of operation.

Introductory activities in Seattle showed a high degree of enthusiasm among employees for the new Amfleet cars, and hopefully this "elan" will carry thru to operations once the shakedown aura has faded. Amfleet equipment represents the first newly-manufactured rail passenger cars to be assigned to Seattle since six Budd-built dining cars were introduced on NORTH COAST LIMITED runs by NP in 1958. They are also the first regularly-assigned new cars on Portland-Seattle service since 1954, when NP 492 and 493, the "Holiday Lounge" cars, were built for NP trains 407 and 408. The last new equipment for the Seattle-Vancouver service was an order of eight cars for the GN INTERNATIONAL trains in 1947.

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I traveled as a passenger on the first Seattle-Portland round trip, southbound on the PUGET SOUND from Seattle, returning at 5:30pm from Portland. A large number of Amtrak brass made the trip south from Seattle in the morning, apportioning their time among service inspection, troubleshooting, and talking with the press. Almost perfect, clear, moderate weather made the trip a great pleasure, and the happiness of employees, railway enthusiasts, and regular passengers blended to form a positive "party" feeling with the approximately 80 passengers on board.

The Amfleet cars ride nicely, and will be a big improvement for passengers over some of the older cars now "bumped" from the runs. My impression was that Amfleet equipment rides much like CN Tempo equipment--a good ride, but due to the light weight of the car, not as good as some older equipment. The cars receive a good workout on parts of the Seattle-Portland run. When the track is good, the cars are outstanding. When the track is a little bumpy, such as Nisqually-East Olympia, the ride is still good, but the passenger has no trouble knowing the car is "working" to provide the quality of ride.

With seating of 84 per car, passengers of larger frame will tend to be cramped. While passengers diverted from buses and aircraft may not object much, the seasoned rail traveler will be aware of the close spacing on Amcoaches. One positive point is that the high-back seats tend to reduce immediate comprehension of the crowding capabilities of the seating configuration.

Train advertising in the past in the Pacific Northwest has stressed the "seeability" of train travel--vista-domes and picture windows, one of the great selling points of the SHASTA DAYLIGHT. Northwestern rail travelers who remember this may find the small Amfleet windows a handicap in seeing the sights from aisle seats. At one point on the return trip north I saw from my window seat on the west side of the train that Mounts Rainier, Adams and St. Helens all were visible at once on the east side. I had to ask my seat companion to lift up his meal tray, retract his foodstand foldout, and slip away from his seat so that I could cross the aisle to an empty seat for mountain-gazing.

I noted that some outside window panes were of lexan, and were deteriorating, while the inside pane was of glass. Hopefully, coach-yard crews will be able to correct this error on a continuing spot basis.

Air conditioning abilities of the Amfleet cars are excellent, altho the low placement of luggage racks may be reducing the ability of cool air to reach the window seats. These low luggage racks will cause many passengers to bump their heads entering and leaving window seats. However, the bottom portion of the rack is cushioned, as on "gallery" commuter cars.

Residents of the Northwest appreciate an air of spaciousness and openness. For example, Seattle's major downtown Olympic Hotel, built in the 1920s, is in danger of demolition because of the small size of rooms. Elsewhere, the travel competition is emphasizing space (Western Airlines), but in the Amtrak passenger operation, space seems to be shrinking. This is true not only in the seating areas, but also in the snack bar. There are no tables in the snack area, and passengers must return to seats to place food on the small, foldout foodstand. My feeling is that existing vista-dome equipment should be refurbished, electrified and equipped with matching diaphragms to be operated with Amfleet cars. Also, a portion of the Amcafe car should be equipped with table-seating. I heard at least one passenger tell the Amcafe attendant: "Older folks are going to spill a lot of food and coffee going back to their seats with this stuff."

Nevertheless, passenger reaction to the new equipment has been excellent. A number of passengers on the first runs were elated with the Amfleet amenities. A married couple one seat ahead of mine said they were riding a train for the first time in two years. They said their previous Seattle-Portland ride had been "awful."

"Was the train late?" I asked.

"No, it was the grungy cars," replied the wife. Approval of that statement came from the husband. Both felt the Amfleet was "marvelous."

Amtrak's brass aboard the first run can be characterized as alert, busy, and comprehensive in their oversight of the startup. Besides district officials from Seattle, Amtrak executives were present from both San Francisco and Washington DC, and all knew that Amtrak president Paul Reistrup was scheduled to make checks on the Seattle-based Amfleet runs a few days later.

In contrast, BN staff did not seem to be "up" for the occasion, perhaps to maintain a tradition of feet-dragging that was obvious from time to time. For example, the trainman on the first Amfleet run from Seattle, like others, was given a printed card from which to read the upcoming station stops over the P.A. system, instructing passengers where the train doors were to be opened. He failed to read the announcement at Centralia, third stop from Seattle. Upon checking, Amtrak men found that the trainman had "difficulty" in reading the Amtrak card. He was re-instructed in the necessity of making the proper P.A. announcements. Later, some Amtrak officials privately wondered how the veteran trainman was able to read his tickets or train orders.

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"Well, are YOU enjoying YOUR new equipment?" asked the BN manager in an off-tone which probably dovetails well with the growing amounts of conversation one hears at present concerning BN's lack of cooperation with Amtrak. Surely the ability of Amtrak to elicit cooperation from the operating railroads is going to continue to be of prime importance if long-range survival of these trains is to be insured.

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A continuing inability to receive such cooperation may mean Amtrak will be forced to become a full-fledged railway of its own, supplying Amtrak locomotive and train crews, thus reducing the points of conflict to those associated with joint-trackage agreements.

Members of the Washington State congressional delegation have privately said that the Seattle-based "local" trains will be subject to discontinuance in about one year unless patronage increases. Thus, Amfleet represents "do or die" for the runs. And yet Amtrak's inability to supply an advertising budget for the new equipment seems even more deadly a threat to permanent operation of the runs than BN's somewhat childish non-cooperation from time to time.

As a train buff, I will miss the passenger cars that have been replaced, even tho the old cars often lacked the maintenance they needed to be fully productive. But if Amfleet works, as it shows much promise of doing, the result will be more passenger trains. And "more passenger trains" as an abstract concept will simply have to take precedence over the nults-and-bolts drive within so many of us that constantly keeps our eyes turned to the rails.

Rail Canada

READER GUY CHARTRAND of St. Lambert, Quebec, writes: "Very unfortunately, the Quebec Palais Station will close at the end of August. To commemorate this event, our society has rented a club car on one of the last trains that will leave this very historic station. The station will be saved, and will be converted to a market next year or so, as Mayor LaMontagne of Quebec City announced in July. Beginning in September, all CN trains will leave from Ste. Foy Station. All this is very sad and the rail enthusiasts in the Province of Quebec are unhappy because it will create a situation like Ottawa's, where you have to travel by city bus to the outskirts of town to catch a train. It's very sad." The St. Lawrence Valley Railway Society (B.P./P.O. Box 400, Cote-des-Neiges, Montreal, Quebec) will run the car on Aug 29 on the end of the Rapido Montreal-Quebec and return, with 6 hours available in Quebec City. Fare is $24.90 round trip (money order only, in Canadian funds). Train leaves Central Station at 8am; leaves Quebec 5:15pm, ar Montreal 8:25pm.

THE RECENT STRIKE of air controllers reportedly created a passenger upsurge on CP Rail. Every conceivable piece of equipment was pressed into service. Ticket sales for the CANADIAN were not limited. As cars were filled, others were added. Sleepers, diners, and RDC's were pressed into service as coaches. Extra food service cars were added. RDC's were reportedly used on the CANADIAN. Three coaches were added to the Toronto-Sudbury section for over 200 additional passengers daily. One train out of Sudbury carried 670 passengers in 21 cars. Do any readers have consists available for this period?

CP RAIL PASSENGER service has appointed four service directors for the training and development of sleeping and dining car personnel and to monitor the quality of on-board services. This summer, 180 summer employees were being trained for duty on the CANADIAN and the ATLANTIC LIMITED.

CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAY will operate two fall Maritimes tours, leaving Vancouver on the SUPER CONTINENTAL, Dates are Sep 13-Oct 3 and Sep 27-Oct 17. The fares start at $955 from Vancouver. Info from any CN travel agent or CN office.

FIRST MAJOR CONSTRUCTION work toward establishment of GO Train service between Toronto and Richmond Hill is about to begin, the Toronto Area Transit Authority announced early in August. First work is grading of 5 miles of roadbed for a second mainline track, beginning early this month, and costing $855,000.

CANADIAN CITIZENS TAKING vacations increased in number in 1975, to a new high of 59%. Most popular travel mode for vacations (taken mostly in summer, while Americans travel about as much in winter) was the auto--63% of trips, up from 56% in 1974. All public transportation showed decreases. Train and bus account for 8%.

Mixed Train of Thoughts

AMTRAK PUBLISHED THE following timetables for June 15: National Timetables, Northeast (form B), Midwest (form C), West Coast/NY-New Orleans-L.A. (form D), NY-Washington (form 1), NY-Phila.-Harrisburg (form 2), NY-Boston-Springfield (form 4), East-Midwest (form 7), Florida (form 8), NY/Boston-Albany-Buffalo-Cleveland/Detroit & DC-NY-Montreal (form 9), Chicago-West Coast (form 10), and Norfolk/DC-Cincinnati-Chicago (form 14). We also have seen a new Florida timetable (form 8) dated July 19 which carries the revised PALMETTO schedule..... COMING IN FALL: Amtrak is reportedly considering cutting 1'55" from the EMPIRE BUILDER and NORTH COAST schedules and 1'30" from the BN portion of the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR. The new eastbound departure from Seattle would be 9:15pm for the NORTH COAST and 2:30pm for the BUILDER. Westbound, the NORTH COAST would reach Seattle at 6:20am and the BUILDER 11:20am. More unconfirmed reports are that the SOUTHWEST LIMITED and the LONE STAR would be combined between Chicago ard Kansas City, that the INTER-AMERICAN would run daily between Chicago and Dallas and continue tri-weekly Dallas-Laredo, and that the MONTREALER would terminate at New York instead of Washington. The schedule cutting mentioned above would jibe with Mr. Reistrup's comments (last issue) about long distance speed increases coming in October..... THE SUNSET LIMITED'S route was blocked by a freight derailment, so train 2 of Jul 18 detoured, with its consist running backwards out of L.A. to Niland, so it could be run forward from there to New Orleans..... ADVERTISING FOR THE Northwest Amfleet runs finally got underway late in July, with TV spots. Observers counted 8 passengers detraining from the MOUNT RAINIER in Seattle on the 27th..... NEW ENGLAND GOVERNORS Special train departed Boston's South Station Jul 11, with 600-700 aboard for the Democratic convention in NY. The 1:30pm departure included one Ambag, one Amclub with club end forward, one Amcafe, 3 Amcoaches, and one Amdinette with tables to rear. Instructions included that all C&S signal maintainers would be on duty and that all drawbridges were not to be opened for 30 minutes prior to the train. High-ranking Amtrak people were to ride the train..... TALL SHIPS DAY in Boston was Jul 10, and the MBTA lines were swamped with riders. The ConRail/PC/NH routes added up to 12 cars to handle outbound evening crowds after being caught off guard on the inbound morning trains..... LAKE SHORE LIMITED westbound on Jul 1 had an E8 unit break down, and the replacement power was another E8 and an Erie-Lackawanna unit of unknown type..... NEW LONDON, CONNECTICUT rail station was rededicated Jul 29 in a ceremony attended by about a dozen agencies who helped save the historic 1885 building from demolition. Amtrak helped by committing itself to a 20-year lease. Anderson Notter Associates, a Boston firm which recycles old structures, reused all the original materials of the building.....

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AMTRAK HAS CHOSEN a site for its new Miami station, just north of N.W. 79th St., and east of LeJeune Road, the corporation announced Jul 29. On Aug 4 Amtrak announced that a contract to construct its new Lakefront station in Cleveland had been awarded to Jance & Co. of Willowick, OH. Construction will start the end of August..... OFF-PEAK COACH FARES for the Florida trains, including the FLORIDIAN will again be available effective Sept 8 thru Dec 17, Amtrak said Aug 4..... THE BROADWAY LIMITED detoured from Colson, OH to Toledo and used the former NYC lines into Chicago on Aug 2, because of a ConRail derailment near Lima, OH. Train 41 arrived at 4:48pm. Bus snafus at South Bend, where passengers were to be bused to Valparaiso and Gary, resulted in passengers being carried by train to Chicago and transported back on ConRail's Valparaiso Locals..... THE RE-EQUIPPING OF the EMPIRE BUILDER, the first bi-level long distance train, is set for late spring of early summer of 1977, says a Chicago newspaper, quoting an Amtrak spokesman..... INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION has rejected the Milwaukee Road's plan to merge with the Burlington Northern.....

A FREIGHT DERAILMENT on ICG main line at Peotone, IL at 4:50pm Jul 27 forced Amtrak to annul train 381, the ILLINI, at Homewood and bus passengers to Champaign. The PANAMA LIMITED, train 59, detoured from Chicago Union Station to Momence, IL via C&WI and C&EI, and Momence to Kankakee, IL via ConRail. Train 392, the SHAWNEE, was terminated at Kankakee and deadheaded back to Champaign for #381 on Jul 28. Passengers on #392 were bused to Homewood and transferred to 381's equipment for the run into Union Station..... SOUTHERN PACIFIC STATION in Lancaster, CA, last used by the former SP SAN JOAQUIN DAYLIGHT, was burned to the ground on Jul 18 by burglars attempting to hide a theft of $300 from the SP safe. It was the oldest remaining building in Lancaster..... NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY Board on Jul 30 called for a change in railroad operating rules that would require mainline trains to remain stopped if the signal-controlled block ahead of them is occupied by another train (presently, a passenger train can enter an occupied block if it proceeds at restricted speed.) The recommendation came about as a result of a 3-train Penn Central collision near Wilmington, DE last Oct 17..... THE HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY of the completion of the SP rail route over the Tehachapis between L.A. and Bakersfield will be celebrated at 4:30pm on Sept 5 at Lang, an almost-nonexistent spot not far from Lancaster, CA. The Pacific Railway Society had tentative plans to run a special passenger train from L.A. for the event..... USUALLY INFORMED SOURCES at Amtrak say that altho the NORTH COAST HIAWATHA will return to tri-weekly operation in mid-September, that permanent daily year-round operation may begin Oct 31. Speculation continues that savings in operating costs due to Amfleet introduction make the improved NCH service possible..... COACH PORTERS ON the COAST STARLIGHT are no longer making the thru trip. Amtrak has switched the assignments in an experiment to reduce the incidence of sleepy or sleeping porters in an effort to improve on-board services. For the interim, the porters will run Seattle to Eugene; Eugene to Oakland; and Oakland to Los Angeles.....

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THE IDAHO TRAIN: after discussions in the Northwest, which Amtrak president Reistrup attended on a late-July trip to assess the new Amfleet operation, the following report reached us: Mr. Reistrup is said to have indicated that there is "no way" that Amtrak can avoid starting the Boise service, as it is mandated by federal law. Very tight problems in conventional equipment mean Amtrak would like to wait for bi-level cars; but because this is not feasible, consideration is being given to asking the ICC for an exemption from the sleeping-car requirement for long distance service. If granted, Amtrak could start up with medium-capacity Amcoaches, connecting across the platform with the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR at Ogden, on the condition that sleepers be operated once new equipment becomes available. It is said that the $430 million appropriation being considered by Congress is sufficient to allow the startup of the Boise train. Meanwhile, UP is reported planning to remove its 24-mile Boise-Orchard link which connects the Boise depot with the main line southeast of Boise...

* * *

REGION XII MEETING of the National Ass'n of RR Psgrs in San Diego Jul 17 resulted in these unanimous resolutions: (1) at least one more daily L.A.-Oakland train, with thru service to Sacramento; (2) more, improved San Diego-L.A. service; (3) daily operation of the SUNSET LIMITED as soon as enough equipment is available; (4) priority given to a second daily, daylight, train Oakland-Seattle; (5) better redcap service at L.A. Union Station; (6) full lounge and parlor service instead of only Amcafes on all present Amfleet routes; (7) closer consultation with NARP and the public by Amtrak before approving new equipment..... PETER BRETZ'S ARTICLE in the Second June issue elicited many comments about his tipping policy. In a new press release, Amtrak's On-Board Services Director David L. Baucom says Amtrak's policy "stresses quality service by all on-board service personnel and does not condone soliciting of gratuities by employees... tipping must be left to the discretion of the passenger".....

FEDERAL RAILROAD ADMINISTRATION has chosen the "best qualified" firm, that of DeLeuw, Cather/Parsons Associates, to oversee the rail passenger improvement program on the Washington-Boston line. Next step is to negotiate a contract with the firm. If that step fails, the FRA will negotiate with the "second best" company. An award is expected to be made by Sept 1..... OFFICIAL BUS GUIDE, June issue, included a multi-page anti-Amtrak spread, from NAMBO and Greyhound, including quotes of negative comments about Amtrak from Forbes, the Wall Street Journal, Mass Transit, and Trains Magazine..... ONE OF THE major train articles to appear in the popular media in the last year is a long, well-researched article by Tracy Kidder, entitled "Trains in trouble", in the Atlantic Monthly, (August). See Quotes of the Week, p. 8..... OUR REPORT ON the DEL MONTE revival last issue was not meant to indicate that Amtrak had approved the conditions of the service--it hasn't yet..... THE FORD ADMINISTRATION, not surprisingly, objected to Amtrak's ordering first class sleepers (reported in this issue), but, according to the Chicago Sun-Times, Reistrup won a vote of confidence from the Amtrak board, which includes an Administration representative, when they voted to go ahead with the revised bi-level car purchase. The newspaper article also praised Reistrup's cleverness in prodding Congress to vote for a $430 million Amtrak appropriation, instead of the $378 the White House wanted to provide..... INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION will hold hearings on the proposed discontinuance of Southern's PIEDMONT, as follows: Washington Sept 13; Charlottesville, VA Sept 14; Lynchburg, VA Sept 15; Greensboro, NC Sept 16; and Charlotte, NC Sept 17; all at 9:30am, in rooms to be designated later..... THE SOUTHERN RAILWAY will offer an excursion behind engine 4449, used to power the Freedom Train on much of its run. The two-day run goes from Atlanta to Salisbury the first day (Aug 28) and Salisbury to Alexandria the next day, with overnight in Salisbury. Info from Southern Railway, O. O. Kell, 40 Marietta St NW, Suite 710, Atlanta, Georgia 30303..... AN UNCONFIRMED REPORT that the FLORIDIAN will carry AUTO-TRAIN cars between Louisville and Florida in the fall, comes from the N.W. Illinois NRHS. AUTO-TRAIN service to Louisville is presently inoperative due to loss of equipment in recent derailments.....

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THE CITY OF Alhambra, CA has signed a $16.8 million contract to lower the SP mainline tracks into a cut below the city streets. Federal funds will help finance the lowering, which involves a 3-mile stretch having nine grade crossings..... AMTRAK PRESIDENT REISTRUP, visiting the Northwest at the start of Amfleet operations, rode the PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL from Vancouver to Seattle and the COAST STARLIGHT from Seattle to Oakland, starting July 22..... NEW YORK STATE Governor Carey has authorized the state transportation commissioner to negotiate with Amtrak to keep the ADIRONDACK running another four years, reports the New York Times (Aug 8). The commissioner will ask for better promotion of the run, and faster running times north of Albany..... THE TRAIN RIDDEN by DOT Secretary Coleman in England recently was the HST (High Speed Train), now in service between London and Edinburgh, and reportedly on Amtrak's shopping list for fast corridor equipment.....

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AMTRAK HAS OBTAINED more 50-foot ex-Army baggage cars for Amfleet use. Cars in the 1200 series have head end power generators, while cars in the 1300 series are baggage cars converted to all-electric power..... THOSE 29 SDP40F engines Amtrak sent to the ICG for overhauling will probably be the first to get head end power generators installed. All SDP40F's are scheduled to get the installation eventually, for bi-level hauling, while F40's, P30's, and E8's will pull only Amfleet cars..... EXCURSIONS ABOARD THE RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR between Denver and Glenwood Springs will be sponsored by the Colorado Midland and the Intermountain chapters of NRHS, and will utilize the regular runs of the domeliner Aug 28-29; Oct 16-17; and Dec 4-5, with overnight stay at the Denver Hotel in Glendood Springs. Info from Box 5181, Terminal Annex, Denver CO 80217. One trip ran already on Jul 10-11.....

WOULD YOU BELIEVE a revival of the Yosemite Valley Railroad? In a recent questionnaire, part of the formation of a Yosemite Master Plan, the Interior Dept. and National Park Service found that 29% of respondents favored initiation of rail access to the park from Merced; however, 40-46% wanted bus service to the park from various California points..... THE MINNESOTA ASSOCIATION of RR Passengers has proposed a schedule change for the ARROWHEAD, with two Sunday trips, leaving Minneapolis at 8am and 8:35pm, and leaving Duluth at 5pm. On Saturdays the train would run just one way, leaving Duluth at 9am. Mon-Fri schedules would remain unchanged..... THE MOUNTAINEER WAS to be assigned cars 8400 and 8401, ex-GN coach-coffee shop cars bumped from Seattle by arrival of Amfleet equipment..... AN EXAMPLE OF schedule padding: the westbound NORTH COAST HIAWATHA arriving Seattle on Jul 16 had been 5 hours late at one point in North Dakota, departed Spokane 1'20" late, and reached seattle on time at 8am..... ACTIVE ROACH COLONIES have reportedly been found in some Amtrak cars operating from the ex-PC coach yard in Chicago..... AMTRAK PRESIDENT REISTRUP told an Atlanta group in mid-July that Amtrak is seriously considering routing a train from Chicago to Atlanta to Florida "at least two or three times a week" when the fall schedules begin in October. Reistrup said Amtrak vetoed a Los Angeles-Atlanta train because of low ridership projections..... THE FIREMAN OF a Grand Trunk freight was killed by a bottle thown by youths on Chicago's south side on Jul 13, as he rode in the cab of a Battle Creek-Chicago freight. The bottle shattered on the cab window frame and struck 27-year-old Kenneth Poelewski of Battle Creek in the face and neck, severing his carotid artery. The bottle-thrower has not been found, and the railroad is offering a $5000 reward for information leading to the assailant's arrest and conviction. The UTU is demanding action on such vandalism, and Congress has introduced bill HR 9290, making it a federal offense to fire any firearm or throw any object at any railroad train operating in interstate commerce..... AN UNCONFIRMED REPORT has it that Amtrak's Paul Reistrup on at least one occasion during his celebrated rail ramblings donned hippie garb to assess the reaction of crew members..... THE BERKELEY CALIFORNIA ex-SP depot was converted into a Chinese restaurant, the China Station, opening in late March 1976.....

Urban-Suburban Transit

A GIANT WESTINGHOUSE ad in the Wall Street Journal (Jul 29) tells us "Two cities in the world have completely automated mass transit systems. The First was San Francisco. The second, Sao Paulo, world's 11th largest city. Here, on the first 10½-mile leg of what will eventually be a 120-mile network, trains run automatically 90 seconds apart, at speeds up to 62 miles per hour. The train control, propulsion and drive equipment are all Westinghouse."

UMTA AND FHWA Jul 26 announced publication of the first bibliography of technical reports on Transportation System Management. Copies are available from UMTA, Office of Public Affairs, 400 7th St., S.W., Washington DC 20590.

THE CABLE CARS of San Francisco have had some trouble early this month. An unusually large number of bad-ordered cars has left passengers and tourists waiting in long lines to ride the machines, on some days with only one-third in operation.

BOSTON & MAINE has just hired a full-time General Manager of Passenger Services with MBTA funds who will report directly to B&M President Alan Dustin. The plan is to tighten service standards and get the trains running right.

LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA has hired a consulting firm to help the city's transportation development programs, and was told that streetcars will be one option to be studied.

NATION'S TRAFFIC TOLL for the first half of 1976 is an estimated 20,457, less than 1% below the same 1975 period. But June was 23% lower than June 1973, before the 55mph speed limit was set.

Express Ads

Dining car china dishes and glasses, several railroads. Stamped envelope brings list. J. McClellan, 1752 S. Wichita, Wichita, Kansas 67213.

"STEAMY" -- FOR YOUNG RAIL ENTHUSIASTS! "Steamy" is a locomotive on the ex D & RGW narrow gauge, now the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad. 28 pages to color, plus an exciting story, gives youngsters a feeling for Rocky Mountain Railroading as it was. $2.00. Dave Ulmer, 1407 Holmes Drive, Colorado Springs CO 80909.

CHARTER THE AMTRAK-APPROVED PRIVATE CAR "MINNEAPOLIS CLUB." This beautiful round end observation-lounge (with full wet bar) seats 32 passengers. Excellent for Reno weekend parties. Reserve your choice date now from GREAT WESTERN TOURS, Sheraton-Palace Hotel, Suite 900, San Francisco 94105. (415) 398-2994.

Dining, sleeping and private car items. Also unusual collector items. Send large SSAE to: RAIL ITEMS, P.O. BOX 1616, MILWAUKEE, WI 53201.

SPECIAL OFFER - You've probably heard about The Fast Mail, the monthly magazine full of news and interesting articles. Now, to let you see if we're for you, we will send you a sample copy (either our April or May, 1976 issue) for nothing. All that we ask is that you send us a 13 cent stamp. Give us a try - you've got nothing to lose. Except one stamp. The Fast Mail, 10700 Seeley, Chicago IL 60643

WANTED: Person to share driving and expense for a portion (yet to be determined) of the 4449 Southern excursion on August 28-29. I plan to be on the excursion both days departing only to get some action slides by auto. ALSO WANTED: Info on portions of Southern's Atlanta-Alexandria line closely paralleled by a road suitable for chasing. Mark Weinberger, 214 W. Howard, Biloxi, Miss. 39530.

October 9, 10, 1976: A Branch Line Ramble over scenic freight only lines of the Canadian National Railways will be operated out of London, Ontario each day using Budd RDCs. Saturday trip will operate to Stratford, Listowel and Kincardine, and return. Sunday trip (one way with Budd cars, return via regular train at extra fare from Burlington) to Toronto via St. Thomas (via old London and Port Stanley interurban route), to Tillsonburg Junction, Lynden, Guelph, Georgetown, Burlington and Toronto. Saturday trip $22.00, Sunday trip $18.00, both days $38.00. For further information, including return fares from Burlington and hotel reservations in London, write: Branch Line Ramble, Windsor-Essex Division, Canadian Railway Historical Ass'n, 300 Cabana Road East, Windsor, Ontario, N9G 1A3.

RAIL TRAVEL NEWS ADVERTISING RATES: Express Ads $1.00 per line of 80 spaces. Display ads (camera-ready copy) $25.00 per half-page (maximum size--4x5 inches). $12.50 for quarter page. Write: Message Media, Ad Dept., P.O. Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709. Thank you!

TRACK-4

Monthly Newsletter $4.00/Year

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